

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of relieving competition between processing jobs sharing a production device, said method comprising the steps of:
  - a. accessing from a user's browser a destination service representing at least one production device;
  - b. retrieving said user's imaging information by said destination service;
  - c. selecting among production options provided by said destination service for a processing job to process said imaging information using said at least one production device;
  - d. estimating the time duration required to process said processing job using said production device with said selected production options;
  - e. and comparing said estimated time duration with a previously determined threshold time duration, such that:
  - f. if said estimated time duration exceeds said previously determined threshold time duration, then disabling processing of said processing job by said production device; otherwise
  - g. if said estimated time duration does not exceed said previously determined threshold time duration, then enabling processing of said processing job by said production device.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said user is allowed to perform selecting step c. and estimating step d. iteratively.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein said user is allowed to perform selecting step c. and estimating step d. sequentially after disabling step f.
4. The method of claim 1 further comprising displaying a message to said user after disabling step f.
5. The method of claim 1 further comprising if said processing is disabled in disabling step f., then providing said user with a link to an alternative production device.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein said previously determined threshold time duration is set by an administrator.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein said previously determined threshold time duration differs according to differing temporal periods.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein said differing temporal periods are selected from the group consisting of hours of the day, days of the week, and days of the month.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said previously determined threshold time is assigned according to said user, such that each of a plurality of differing previously determined threshold time durations is assigned to at least one of a plurality of individual users.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein each of said plurality of differing previously determined threshold time durations can differ further according to differing temporal periods.

11. The method of claim 1 further comprising if said processing is disabled in disabling step f., then providing said user an option of reserving a deferred start time for processing of said processing job using said production device in accordance with said selected production options, such that if said user opts to reserve a start time, then setting a deferred start time, storing said processing job during a deferral period until said deferred start time occurs, and then deferred processing said processing job using said production device in accordance with said selected production options.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein said deferred processing job is stored in a medium selected from the group consisting of a hard disk and an image store associated with said user's identity.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein said setting said deferred start time includes avoiding conflict with unavailable deferred start times of said production device.

14. The method of claim 11 further comprising estimating the resources required to process said processing job using said production device with said selected production options.

15. The method of claim 14 further comprising reserving quantities of said respective resources required to process said processing job during said deferral period .

16. The method of claim 15 wherein said reserved resources required to process said processing job are monitored during said deferral period.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein during said deferral period a warning message is displayed whenever any of said reserved resources is depleted to a quantity substantially equal to said reserved quantity of said reserved resource.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein during said deferral period said reserved resources are reported as if said reserved quantities of said reserved resources had already been consumed.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein during said deferral period said warning message is removed if said reserved resources are replenished above said reserved quantity.

20. The method of claim 1 further comprising if said processing is disabled in disabling step f., then providing said user an option of processing said processing job using said production device, subject to interruption by a subsequent processing job of a subsequent user.

21. The method of claim 20 further comprising dynamically displaying job status including interrupt status at said user's browser.

22. The method of claim 20 wherein said subsequent interrupting processing job is a local processing job of a user local to said production device, such that processing of interrupted processing job resumes after said processing of said local processing job is complete, said local processing job being loaded and unloaded manually at said production device.

23. The method of claim 20 wherein said interrupted processing job is stored while interrupted, such that said interrupted processing job is deferred but not canceled.

24. The method of claim 20 wherein if said interrupted processing job includes more than one output copy, then said interrupted processing job is allowed to complete the currently processing output copy of said more than one output copy before being interrupted.

25. The method of claim 20 further comprising separating output copies of said interrupted processing job from output copies of said interrupting processing job using an operation selected from the group consisting of delivering output copies of said interrupted processing job and said interrupting processing job into separate output bins, delivering output copies into a common output bin, such that output copies of said interrupted processing job are offset relative to output copies of said interrupting processing job, and delivering output copies into a common output bin, such that output copies of said interrupted processing job are separated relative to output copies of said interrupting processing job by separator sheets.

26. A destination service representing a production device, said destination service operable to:

download web content into a user's browser;  
retrieve said user's imaging information;  
select under user interactive control via said web content from among production options for processing said imaging information using said production device;  
estimate the time duration required to process said imaging information using said production device in accordance with said selected production options;  
compare said estimated time duration with a previously determined threshold time duration;  
if said estimated time duration exceeds said previously determined threshold time duration, disable processing said imaging information by said production device; otherwise  
if said estimated time duration does not exceed said previously determined threshold time duration, enable processing said imaging information by said production device.

27. The destination service of claim 26 further operable to select among production options and to estimate the time duration iteratively.

28. The destination service of claim 27 further operable to select among production options and to estimate the time duration iteratively after determining that said estimated time duration exceeds said previously determined threshold time duration.

29. The destination service of claim 26 further operable to display a message to said user after determining that said estimated time duration exceeds said previously determined threshold time duration.

30. The destination service of claim 26 further operable after determining that said estimated time duration exceeds said previously determined threshold time duration to provide said user with a link to an alternative production device.

31. The destination service of claim 26 further operable to determine differing said previously determined threshold time durations according to differing temporal periods.

32. The destination service of claim 31 wherein said differing temporal periods are selected from the group consisting of hours of the day, days of the week, and days of the month.

33. The destination service of claim 26 further operable to assign differing said previously determined threshold time durations according to user, such that each of a plurality of differing previously determined threshold time durations is assigned to at least one of a plurality of said users.

34. The destination service of claim 33 wherein each of said plurality of differing previously determined threshold time durations can differ further according to differing temporal periods.

35. A system for relieving competition between processing jobs sharing a production device, said system comprising:

a user's browser; and

a destination service accessible from said user's browser and operable to download content into said user's browser, said destination service further representing a production device and operable to arrive at a priority level for each said processing job and to prevent said processing job from running if said prevented processing job has a certain arrived at priority, such that another processing job can use said production device, said another processing job having an arrived at priority different from said prevented processing job.

36. The system of claim 35 further comprising means for web based imaging interconnected with said user's browser and said destination service.

37. The system of claim 35 wherein said destination service is remote from said user's browser.